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INSIDE SSI

$1.00

Well, we finally did it. After spending the past seven years publishing 78 different computer games, we have finally published our first S.S.I. gamer newsletter. You may wonder what has taken us so long, for after all, most serious gamers (myself included) have grown up with the idea that all major game companies naturally publish their own newsletters/ magazines.

All I can say is that publishing 78 games has been more than a full-time job, and it has only been recently with the addition of several new employees that we have been able to devote the resources necessary to publish this newsletter. Now that we are able to publish **INSIDE S.S.I.**, we hope that it will help you get more from your S.S.I. games, and we hope to use it to learn more about our customers' gaming desires. Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have supported us over the years, for it is you who have allowed us the opportunity to make a living playing games.

Joel Billings, President

WELCOME

Welcome to the premiere issue of **INSIDE S.S.I.** This quarterly newsletter is something of an experiment for us. We hope to use it as a two-way communications device between S.S.I. and our end-users, helping each of us to understand the other better. (If this newsletter proves popular, we might even consider turning it into a real magazine somewhere down the road.) Take a look over this first issue and let us know what you think of it. If you would like to see any changes, let us know that too. Please send your comments to: Inside S.S.I., Strategic Simulations, 1046 N. Rengstorff Ave., Mountain View, CA 94043.

The format of this issue is typical of what we plan for future issues. This column will take about a page, and will be devoted to looking "behind the scenes" here at S.S.I. We plan to have one page devoted to fantasy, science fiction, and adventure games, and another page devoted to war games. What fills those pages will vary with each issue. They may contain designers' notes, interviews, new scenarios or something submitted by one of you. Miscellaneous topics will be covered on the final page.

Before we discuss what's in the works this month, we thought we might give you a quick overview of S.S.I. Strategic Simulations, Inc. was founded in late 1979 by Joel Billings. S.S.I.'s first product was Computer Bismarck, which was published for the Apple computer in 1980. Since that time, S.S.I. has grown to include over 30 full-time employees. Today we make or convert games for many systems, including the Apple II series, Macintosh, Commodore 64/128, Amiga, Atari 8-bit and ST, and IBM and compatible computers. About 50% of our revenues come from the sale of fantasy/ adventure games, about 45% from the sale of war games, and about 5% from the sale of other types of games. We'll highlight different departments here at S.S.I. in upcoming issues.

WORK IN PROGRESS

What follows is a list of those products currently in the mill here at S.S.I. Please note that the release dates, titles, and versions are TENTATIVE. Some of the games will undoubtedly slip down the schedule. Thus, please do not order a game until you've seen an ad for it, it is announced in our catalog, or you have called us to make sure it has been released.

B-24

Release date--early Summer, planned for Apple II Series, C64/128.

B-24 will mark a first for us--a real time bomber simulator. You'll lead a WWII bomber group to destroy the Ploesti oil fields in Romania. But since it's an S.S.I. simulator we'll be merging the hands-on flying of the plane with the strategy and decision making of an air campaign. By John Gray, author of 50 Mission Crush.

WIZARD'S CROWN II

Release date-early Summer, planned for C64/128, Apple II series, Atari 8-bit.

Paul Murray is currently hard at work on the sequel to Wizard's Crown. Although similar to Wizard's Crown, the sequel will be mostly an overland adventure. You can use your characters from Wizard's Crown or create new ones. If you keep the same characters, all of their skills and characteristics will remain intact. More magic items will be available and it will be possible to talk, run, surrender, or engage in combat.

PHANTASIE III

Release date-Spring, planned for Apple II series, C64/128.

Enter into the final confrontation with Nikademus! Changes to this sequel of Phantasie and Phantasie II include the addition of bows, tougher monsters, and more complete combat results. You will now know where on your character's body he has been hit via a graphic at the top of the screen showing the status of limbs, torso, etc. By Doug Wood.

CHICKAMAUGA

Release date-Spring, planned for Apple II series, C64/128, Atari 8-bit.

Chuck Kroegel and Dave Landrey are working on the next game in their tactical American Civil War series. Units will be able to be moved either by brigade or demi-brigade and the time scale has been changed to one hour per phase. The Chickamauga battlefield was very large, so an option will be included to allow the use of either the regular scale map (20 squares by 10 squares on the screen) or a smaller scale map (40 squares by 20 squares on the screen).

THE FRONT LINE

Wargame Construction Set

This month we are pleased to have Roger Damon, author of Wargame Construction Set, give us some background information on the design of this game. WCS is available now for the Atari 8-bit and will be available for the Commodore 64/128 within a few months.

The Wargame Construction Set (WCS) marks a watershed for me. With WCS, I have now designed four games for S.S.I. (the other three are Field of Fire, Nam, and Panzer Grenadier). Let's face it; how many Roger Damon games can you take? Whatever your answer, WCS leaves it pretty much up to you now. I wish I had designed it years ago and then I could have cranked out games with it, one after another. That would have been easier than the "pretty much from scratch" designs of Field of Fire and Panzer Grenadier. When I started on Nam, I realized that I was doing a number of things the same. The map, for instance, was basically in the same memory location using the same characters. Unit capabilities were read from a vast table. I figured, why hand-code all this stuff? So, somewhere between Panzer Grenadier and Nam, some utilities were created that were eventually polished and trimmed to make the WCS.

The WCS also means that it's time for me to move on. Somewhere between the consumer and the "crest of the wave" of computer technology lies the software designers. There is an ever-present urging to move on to new things. I have no problem that the WCS, in effect, puts a cap on my design style. I enjoy the fact that, in moving on, I can give those who like my games something that does not present itself as an end, but more as an open door.

I would like to thank all those who playtested my games. I would also like to thank those who expressed appreciation for my games. You kept me going.

So being at that point where the road turns abruptly, there are a few things left hanging around that I would like to address. I'm nuts about playability. I like my games to flow evenly from start to finish. To accomplish this, the user's input into the game must become second nature. I'd like to think that, if you are playing my games today and stopped, you could boot them up 10 years from now and get right back into them smoothly. But that has not been the goal. The goal has been to offer the player a situation that engages him. To give him a game, a pace, and an interface that urges him on toward a resolution of a conflict. Your job in my games is clear cut: Give commands for fire and movement. I've tried to make the giving of commands as easy as possible. Whatever was left in the machine was devoted towards making the results of those commands as deep as possible. Everything from weapons effects, to bridges blowing up in your face, to tracks in the snow was included at some point. I only hope I've given you some of the feelings of what it might have been like to face a Soviet armored attack or an ambush in Viet Nam. To take you to a point where you know your next command may either make or break the situation. To let you take the game to the turning point, and then around the next bend. And to do it with a joystick and three buttons.

I've designed a number of scenarios in WCS that stand out for me. The following are a few of my favorites:

Rommel's 88's

Here's a seemingly hopeless situation. Not only are you outnumbered, but you're initially outgunned. It really peaks out nice when you finally get your 88's booming and the tide turns.

Delta Force Rescue

This is a unique situation with an interesting rag-tag mix of forces at your disposal plus some high octane firepower. It's got a good feel and lots of options.

Abuse on the Meuse

This answered the question "can the construction set do the Bulge for me?" The problem is it's for two players. The interesting thing is it's for two players. I know a one player version could be done, but it would require so much work as to warrant being almost a separate game. I do believe it's there though. Any takers?

Battlecruiser Scenario

This WWII scenario for our new Battlecruiser game was submitted by Thomas C. Springsteen.

Battle of the River Plate--December 13, 1939

After a highly successful commerce raiding campaign early in the war, the "Pocket Battleship" Admiral Graf Spee planned one last strike off the coast of Uruguay prior to returning to Germany. On the morning of December 13, 1939, she closed on what she thought was the weak escort of a small convoy. What she mistook as two destroyers and a light cruiser soon were clearly identified as light cruisers Ajax, Achilles, and the heavy cruiser Exeter. This was the squadron of Commodore Henry Harwood, who had successfully guessed the Graf Spee's strategy. In the sharp fight that followed, the Exeter suffered severe damage and the Graf Spee received signficant hits. Unable to shake the trailing British light cruisers, the Graf Spee entered the neutral port of Montevideo. Forced to leave several days later, and believing she was cornered by superior British forces, she was blown up by her crew. This scenario is among the classic naval engagements of the second world war.

PROGRAMMER NOTES

Map = Open Sea
Time/Date = 0614 hours 12/13/1939
Length = 4 hours
VL = 8 (32,000)
Sea Control = Neutral
Damage Control = Axis (4) and Allied (3)
Action = Battleline
Ships/Commands (AXIS) : A) CA-ADM GRAF SPEE (#2); X, Y = (18, 19), heading of 134, speed of 20.
Ships/Commands (ALLIED) : A) CL-AJAX (#42); X, Y = (40, 39), heading of 44, speed of 15, division #1 leader;
B) CL-ACHILLES (AJAX CLASS, #42); X, Y = (39, 40), heading of 44, speed of 15, division #1; C) CA-EXETER (#37); X, Y = (38, 41), heading of 44, speed of 15, division #2 leader

War in the South Pacific

An American capture of Truk is an immediate American decisive victory. A Japanese capture of Fiji is an immediate Japanese decisive victory.

ROADWAR 2000

*Jeff Johnson, author of **Roadwar 2000** offers his insight on how to successfully complete the game. Roadwar 2000 is currently available for the Apple II series, Commodore 64/128, and IBM and compatible computers. Atari ST, Amiga, and Macintosh versions are planned for Spring release.*

Roadwar 2000 is a game of many facets. Unlike many games, there is no single overall strategy which will guarantee success. The intent of this article is to share with the reader a few excerpts from my personal rules of the road.

The road to victory begins when contact is made with the Government Underground Biolabs (GUB). Contact depends upon the number and size of the cities controlled by the gang. Control of cities can be accomplished in either of two ways. The first method of gaining control is to build a large gang. Early gang building allows earlier promotion of the members. Unfortunately, it takes time to properly equip a gang for fighting, and looting cities for equipment and supplies lessens their value when conquered. The second method is to travel fast and light and to scour the region for uncontrolled cities or cities inhabited by Reborners. The advantage to this method is that you need a much smaller gang and can therefore begin conquering cities much sooner. Since combat should be avoided, recruit only enough men for scouting duties. Should combat occur, however, victory is much more questionable.

Once you have discovered the password, the time to search for people has come. You must now travel from city to city searching for an agent who will send you to the GUB. Don't overlook cities within the gang's empire which may have been searched before the password was received.

Once you have located the GUB, go there at once. Upon accepting the mission, your search for scientists begins. If you have not built a combat-ready gang yet, now is the time to begin.

This is also the best time to acquire cronies. A doctor may usually be found at the Mayo Clinic and a drill sergeant at Colorado Springs. You can easily intuit the best place to seek a politician. The search for the scientists should begin near the GUB. Search each city repeatedly for people; remember that it is harder to find someone in a big city than in a small one. Increase the search radius until an agent is found who will send you to a given region to seek the named scientist. If no agents have been found, continue searching, as scientists may be found by chance while searching for clues.

Do not rush back to the GUB with each scientist as they are found; wait until all of the easy scientists have been found or the search leads back toward the GUB. Also, there are no clues to the whereabouts of Dorothy McAllister or Cheng lu Sinh. They must be discovered by chance or with the Radio Direction Finder (RDF).

After seven scientists have been returned, the eighth scientist must be found. First, remember that not only may you find the scientists, but that there are also two agents out there just waiting to narrow down the search to a single region. Secondly, you will never find two agents or scientists in the same city so this will narrow the search further. Finally, scientists avoid cities with Healers. These few facts, if you have kept a good record of your travels, will ease the burden considerably.

A gang consists of men and vehicles. The acquisition, improvement, and management of these two commodities are of the utmost importance. Vehicles can be acquired by search or seizure. It is often best to build a gang by search. Don't take any vehicles smaller than a station wagon. Don't bother with tractors or construction vehicles either. When sufficient vehicles have been acquired, fill them with troops. Try not to exceed five hundred men, or supply may become a problem. Load up with fuel and you are ready to embark on the road to self-improvement.

To improve your vehicles, head for Detroit, Indianapolis, and Pittsburgh. Visit S.S.I. if the gang gets out west. Find a drill sergeant as soon as possible to begin training the troops.

The gang will evolve, eventually, into a nuclear corps of five to eight vehicles with excellent attributes and a band of men heavy in Armsmasters and Bodyguards. A smattering of lower quality troops should be maintained for scouting and envoy duties and to dilute casualties suffered by the better troops in combat. New vehicles may be added by seizure during combat. Only buses and semis are really worth the effort.

Tactical combat is practically a game in itself. Each battle may last as long as an hour. Tactical combat is the means by which a ganglord increases his ability to command multiple vehicles and therefore add more vehicles to the gang. Only in tactical combat can an enemy vehicle be captured and incorporated into the gang. Finally, tactical combat is loads of fun.

One of my favorite aspects of Roadwar 2000 is the variety incorporated into the game...so much that few, if any, players see it all. Examples include the many special cities, the pursuits by Invader Death squads and even a tiny text adventure trip to the Bahamas. Add this to the fact that virtually every parameter in the game is randomized at the start and thus no two games can possibly be the same. Therefore, there can be no one best way to play Roadwar 2000 because everyone who plays is playing a slightly different game.

If you'd like to receive a complimentary 1987 subscription to *Inside S.S.I.*, please send this coupon to:

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Our **30-day exchange policy** is designed to give you an opportunity to see if the game you have meets your expectations or, in case you have an IBM or Apple compatible computer, to make sure it runs on your system. If, during this 30-day period you decide you don't want to keep the game, you simply return the entire game (in its original condition) to us, along with a copy of your sales receipt and we will exchange it for another game.

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Manager, Customer Support

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Wizard's Crown

Q. How do I get into the Mansion?
A. Use the Emerald Key.

Q. Where do I find the Emerald Key?
A. In the Old Thieves' Guild.

Q. Where is the Old Thieves' Guild?
A. Ask the Master at the Rusty Nail.

Phantasie II

Q. How do I get to the Nether-worlds?
A. Use the Mad Wizard's machine in the stone castle.

Q. How do I get to the Astral Plane?
A. Use the vortex near the Impling Hatchery.